

AENEAS AND DIDO AS THE *FLAMEN* AND *FLAMINICA* IN THE SERVIAN COMMENTARY ON
VERGIL'S *AENEID*

by

Kristin Fanciullacci

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Anthony Corbeill
Chairperson

Emma Scioli

Tara Welch

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The Thesis Committee for Kristin Fanciullacci certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Anthony Corbeil
Chairperson

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ABSTRACT

The Servian commentary on Vergil's *Aeneid* has two primary authors: one, Servius himself; two, evidence of an earlier commentator sometimes considered to be Aelius Donatus. In a number of notes from this second author, the commentator finds in the *Aeneid* what he considers to be allusions that associate Aeneas with the *flamen Dialis*, an ancient, high-ranking Roman priest. In book 4 the association expands to include Dido as the priest's wife, the *flaminica*. This thesis examines these notes in detail to determine the origins and context of such an association, what impact this portrayal has on the reading of Dido and Aeneas' relationship and their respective characters, and the potential motivations of the two commentators in including or excising these notes. Though the idea that Vergil intended for his readers to understand these allusions to Aeneas as the *flamen Dialis* is rejected by modern scholars, it still offers insight into the minds of Vergil's earliest scholars, and may even add another layer to our own reading of the *Aeneid*'s most (in)famous couple.

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INTRODUCTION

I.

Vergil has received abundant critical attention over the years, yet one of his earliest scholars has received considerably less so. The commentary of Servius (or rather, the Servian commentary tradition) on Vergil's *Aeneid* is part of a tradition of ancient scholarly criticism. While it may often lack the focus or methods of a modern commentary, it can nevertheless provide insight into what ancient academics and teachers found worth commenting on, how ancient readers interpreted the poem, and how they dealt with troublesome issues. Their remarks may even impact the modern reader's interpretation.

Our own knowledge of Maurus Servius Honoratus comes primarily from his own writing and an appearance in Macrobius's fifth-century work, the *Saturnalia*, though the latter dates after Servius' death. Servius was a fourth-century scholar and teacher at Rome. In addition to a work on Donatus' *Ars*, he wrote a commentary on all of Vergil's writings, including the *Aeneid* – discussing it book by book, line by line. Kaster argues convincingly that Servius' writings on Vergil were intended as an “instrument of a teacher” for students, citing the numerous locations where Servius uses the text of Vergil as a springboard to discuss proper grammar and usage in his own day.¹ My thesis, however, is less concerned with the linguistic issues of the Servian commentary, and moreso with the content of a select few notes ostensibly dealing with Roman religion, but at the service of offering a new critical perspective on the relationship between Dido and Aeneas, and Aeneas' role in the epic.

¹ Kaster 170.

II.

It is important to note before treating these comments that the text of Servius is not merely the work of one author (hence the term, ‘Servian commentary tradition’). There are instead two primary hands in the work – one, Servius himself, the other, a figure whose identity is not entirely known. Therefore, there is the basic text of Servius, as well as an expanded Servius, referred to variously as Servius Danielis, DServ., DS, or Servius Auctus. The latter designation, or simply ‘Auctus,’ will be used in this paper to refer to the expanded material, while ‘Servian commentary’ will refer to the combined work. Goold concludes, in his comprehensive overview of the situation, that the non-Servian material is likely from a mostly-lost commentary of Aelius Donatus, a scholar of the mid-fourth century, with which an unknown compiler supplemented the later text of Servius.² The two strains do overlap in places, however, showing that Servius was aware of and using the material allegedly written by Donatus. Kaster also writes that the stated purpose of Donatus’ work, found in the extant dedication of the commentary, was not that of an instrument of the teacher to explicate material for his students, but that of a “resource for other *grammatici*” to use as a font of knowledge or basis for their works, which purpose Servius followed as he adopted or excised various parts of Donatus’ notes for his own commentary.³ As the bulk of the notes treated in this paper come solely from the Auctus text, I will be careful to keep distinct what is said in Servius proper from what is contained in the expanded text – which was not originally included by Servius – so that eventually some reason for these excisions may be discerned.

² Goold 104. For a fuller overview of the compiler’s role, which this paper will not treat, see Goold 105-122.

³ Kaster 169-170.

My paper draws its inspiration from an issue briefly raised by Alison Sharrock in “*Aemulatio*: The Critic as Intertext”. In this article, she relates that in his commentary on book 4 of the *Aeneid*, Auctus compares Aeneas and Dido to a Roman priestly couple, specifically a *flamen* and *flaminica*. With this theory, one imagines that the Auctus commentator seeks to explicate issues of the text, among them the nature of Dido and Aeneas’ relationship (and how it is to be viewed). However, he also raises even more for the modern reader of his commentary, such as to what extent such a portrayal absolves or condemns the characters involved and to what extent we may take these notes as the viewpoint of the commentator. Ultimately, the comparison might be able to shed light on what the commentators thought not only of the characters, but also of the issues involved, and of Vergil as an author. The issue at the heart of book 4’s flaminical portrayal is that of *culpa*, in reference to line 4.172, where Vergil writes “[Dido] calls it marriage, and cloaks her guilt by this name” (*coniugium vocat; hoc praetexit nomine culpam*). Scholars have long sought to explain what exactly Vergil meant by *culpa* and by the line in general. Rather frustratingly, neither commentator has anything to say about this line in particular.⁴ Dido swore a vow to remain true to her former husband’s memory, and in her relationship with Aeneas, she is often seen as abandoning that vow. However, as Sharrock writes, there is sometimes considered to be a problem “in blaming Dido for planning...a second marriage,” when the vow she breaks is only one made in grief.⁵ The nature of Dido and Aeneas’

⁴ Servius only comments “as above, *succumbere culpa* [to succumb to blame],” words spoken by Dido at line 19. However, Servius claims that the *culpa* in that line is attributable to an “ancient rite” (*antiquum ritum*) whereby twice-married women were barred from priesthood (*sacerdotio*) – an exceedingly odd comment, considering nowhere else does Servius portray Dido as a priestess in any way. For further detail, see Chapter 3, section 3.

⁵ Sharrock 20.

relationship, and to what extent Dido or Aeneas can be blamed their participation in it, is a contentious issue in both ancient and modern criticism.

Sharrock contends that the Servian commentary, and especially Servius, is more subtle and understanding in its treatment of Dido and her relationship with Aeneas than one might expect, and takes the flaminical theory as evidence toward this view. However, as I stated, the notes that relate Aeneas and Dido to the *flamen* and *flaminica* are found only in the expanded text. At any rate, for Sharrock, the notes imply not only a marriage between Dido and Aeneas, but also that they are “[flawed] embodiments of a very Roman institution.”⁶ I would like to examine these ideas in further detail.

⁶ Sharrock 15; 20.

CHAPTER 1: *FLAMEN/FLAMINICA*, AENEAS/DIDO

I.

First, a brief overview of the Roman *flamen* is needed. The *flamen* was an important Roman priest, and was, along with such others as the *rex sacrorum*, Vestal Virgins, *pontifex maximus* and other *pontifices*, a member of the pontifical college.⁷ Devoted to a particular god, the *flamen* was appointed by the *pontifex maximus* for a lifetime position. There were three major *flamines* – to Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus (the *flamen Dialis*, *Martialis*, and *Quirinalis*, respectively), and twelve minor ones. During the imperial period, emperors received a *flamen* after their deification (though Julius Caesar may have received one during the end part of his reign, depending on how far Cicero's rhetoric in *Philippic 2* can be taken as true).⁸ Of these, the *flamen Dialis* was by far the most honored, and there is the greatest amount of information from antiquity available for him.⁹ This relative abundance may be due, at least in part, to the extraordinary number of both honors and restrictions placed on the priest, the latter "the most burdensome...in the whole compass even of Roman ceremonial religion."¹⁰ The *flamen Dialis* was *always* a priest, the continual servant of the god, in contrast to other priests, who took on the role only as the occasion demanded.¹¹ There is, then, more information to pass down concerning his life. When the Servian commentary mentions a *flamen*, the *flamen Dialis* is meant, unless he further

⁷ Prescendi 448; Szemler 22, nt. 3.

⁸ Cic. *Phil.* 2.110.

⁹ Prescendi 449.

¹⁰ Ramsay and Wayte 865.

¹¹ Ibid. 865.

qualifies the term.¹² Similarly, the title and position of *flaminica* were reserved for the wife of the *flamen Dialis* specifically.

It is these honors and restrictions that the commentary uses to identify Aeneas and Dido as a *flamen Dialis* and his wife, finding allusive references allegedly present in Vergil's text. Though occasionally other aspects of Roman religion and priesthoods are associated with these characters, in book 4 of the commentary *flamines* receive the most attention. A full description of all restrictions and honors present in the historical tradition would be too long and ultimately unnecessary, but a partial list of the ones relevant to the commentary's notes would be helpful. Marital restrictions on the *flamen* and *flaminica* receive treatment in several notes – notably, what kind and how many marriages are appropriate. Also, a description and explanation of the clothing and attributes of both figures appear in several places. The *flamen* and his wife were almost always in “full dress,”¹³ and the commentary draws the conclusion from several depictions of Dido and Aeneas that they are wearing items more or less connected to the ritual dress and instruments of the priestly couple. In the final note of this sort in book 4, the commentary treats the strange restriction on how high, and on what kind of stairway, a *flaminica* can climb. These themes form the basis for the notes in book 4; other restrictions on travel, unclean objects, food, and sacrifices are discussed elsewhere in the Servian commentary. Ultimately this odd assortment of notes paints a complex picture of Dido's and Aeneas' characters, and of their relationship. All restrictions and attributes shall be elaborated further as the relevant notes are treated in this thesis.

¹² Holstein 24.

¹³ Prescendi 449; Ramsay and Wayte 865.

II.

There are seven notes in book 4 of the Servian commentary on the *Aeneid* that serve to associate either Dido or Aeneas (or both) with the flamine. I will not discuss the notes in the same order they appear in the commentary, though my order does not deviate too far from Servius Auctus'. The first note and the last two in the commentary are also the first and last to be treated in this chapter. The remaining notes I have grouped according to their content (clothing and marriage). The first of these comments on the flamine occurs at 4.29,¹⁴ at the point in the *Aeneid* where Dido confesses her new love to Anna and talks of her vow to Sychaeus, and it is one of the most interesting notes. It deals primarily with the restrictions on marriage and remarriage faced by both the *flamen* and *flaminica* (for these restrictions are not exactly the same for each). The text of Auctus reads:

Sane caeremoniis veterum flaminicam nisi unum virum habere non licet, quod hic ex persona Didonis exsequitur, dolentis stuprum admissum in amore Aeneae, quod supra dictis versibus probavit... Nec flamini aliam ducere licebat uxorem, nisi post mortem flaminicae uxoris: quod expeditur, quia post mortem Didonis Laviniam duxit, et quod subrepta vel retenta Creusa ex ipsius quoque confessione et praedicatione regia parata fuerit: quo nullum piaculum fore denuntiatur.

Indeed, in the rites of the ancients it was not permitted that the *flaminica* have a husband, except the one, which fact [Vergil] pursues here in Dido's character as she is grieving for the *stuprum* committed in her love for Aeneas. This he demonstrated with the verses spoken above... Nor was it permitted for the *flamen* to take another wife, except after the death of his wife, the *flaminica*: and this object is obtained, since he married Lavinia after Dido's death, and because, Creusa having been stolen away or held back, from her very confession and pronouncement a royal wife was prepared for: by which it is officially announced that there would be no transgression.

(Serv. Auct. Aen. 4.29)¹⁵

¹⁴ All citations of Servius/Servius Auctus are listed by the corresponding book and line number in the *Aeneid*.

¹⁵ The Latin text used for all quotations of the Servian commentary is that of Thilo and Hagen. All translations are my own.

There are two main things worth noting. First, the commentator indicates here that Dido and Aeneas are representatives, to some degree, of the flaminical couple. In earlier books of the commentary, there are several notes that raise the interpretation of Aeneas as a *flamen* (which shall be examined later), but here he adds Dido to this portrayal, without explaining exactly why she is to be a *flaminica*. The clue comes in the phrase *quia post mortem Didonis Laviniam duxit*, which implies that Aeneas has married Dido, as he married (*duxit*) Lavinia after Dido's death. The association must look ahead to the relationship that Dido and Aeneas are to share, and would seem to bestow a kind of marital legitimacy on it, by associating them with one of the most sacred couples in all Rome.

The second, and more complex, issue is that of absolution. Sharrock writes that Dido and Aeneas are “flawed embodiments” of the couple.¹⁶ Part of this flaw is the issue of remarriage. The *flaminica* was meant to be a virgin at the time of her wedding to the *flamen*,¹⁷ and neither figure was permitted to take a second spouse. However, a point not made above in the commentary is that “a divorce was not permitted, and if she [the *flaminica*] died the *Dialis* was obliged to resign.”¹⁸ Aeneas, on the other hand, still seems to be at least somewhat of a *flamen* according to Auctus after Creusa's (and Dido's) death.¹⁹ Above, the commentator seems to exculpate the *flamen* Aeneas of any guilt in taking Dido as, symbolically at least, a second wife. Creusa does not count, one supposes, since perhaps

¹⁶ Sharrock 20.

¹⁷ Ramsay and Wayte 866.

¹⁸ Aulus Gellius writes that “if [the *flamen*] loses his wife, he withdraws from office (*uxorem si amisit, flamonio decedit*) [10.15].

¹⁹ It is possible that Aeneas does ‘resign,’ so to speak, after Dido's death in book 4. Notes in later books still bring up *flamines* in relation to Aeneas, but seem to connect him more broadly to priesthood in general, rather than an embodiment of the *flamen*. For an alternate explanation, however, see the end of Chapter 2, section I, below.

Aeneas only became a *flamen* once he received his fated duty to found Rome, with its Roman priests (the commentary, of course, does not make this explicit).²⁰ In addition, his first wife (whether a *flaminica* or not) seems to have given him special dispensation of a sort to marry again; however, one might expect the proto-Roman Lavinia to be the next true *flaminica*-to-be, not Dido. It is a confusing attribution, one that gives a weight and importance, and even Romanness to Dido, perhaps to match her strong presence in the epic itself.

However, at the same time that Dido is given status as the wife (or wife-to-be) of a Roman priest, rather than as a mistress, this status is undermined in a way that it is not explicitly done for Aeneas. While Auctus assures the reader that Aeneas has committed “no transgression” (*nullum piaculum*), the character of Dido admits to a *stuprum* in her newfound love – a fact which Vergil “proved” (*probavit*). If Aeneas and Dido are improper embodiments, it would seem that Dido is the far more improper, whose own confession here betrays her guilt. She can never be a proper *flaminica*, since the fact that she had a husband before has already broken one of the requirements for the priesthood. Both Servius and Auctus have indicated that Dido is guilty of some wrongdoing in loving Aeneas; in 4.23, for example, Servius writes that Dido covers up an “ignoble thing” (*inhonestam rem*) when she associates her new passion with her former proper marital love, but which idea Auctus strengthens: “this [the ardor of the marital bond] is, that by which husbands are accustomed to be esteemed; for it would be too sexually forward to say: I fell in love with Aeneas” (*hoc est, quo mariti diligere solent; nam erat meretricium dicere: in amorem*

²⁰ Only book 2 features a ‘pre-destiny’ Aeneas, and the only two notes to mention *flamines* from this section are only vaguely connected to Aeneas.

Aeneae incidi). And if Dido is to be a *flaminica*, her vow of chastity to Sychaeus is added to; now she cannot marry again for two reasons – the vow she made to Sychaeus as well as her priestly status forbid it. So, while rules are bent or potential conflicts explained away (whether by Creusa or Auctus) in order to allow Aeneas a second wife, they are not bent for Dido; she may be a *flaminica*, but she is one due to fall.

Before proceeding further into Dido and Aeneas' alleged marriage, I will consider several notes in which the Auctus commentary works at strengthening the idea that Dido and Aeneas are both portrayed as flaminical by Vergil. The clothing of the *flaminica* and *flamen* were distinctive and always worn, making them key identifying features. A comment at 4.137 finds several references to the attributes of a *flaminica* in Vergil's description of Dido before the hunt. In the *Aeneid*, Dido is described thus: "surrounded by a Sidonian *chlamys* with an embroidered border, whose quiver is gold and whose hair is knotted with gold, a golden pin ties up her purple garment" (*Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo/cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum/aurea purpuream subnectit fibula uestem*, 4.137-139), a description which recalls an image more of royalty and foreign luxury than anything else.²¹ However, the commentator reads the passage very differently, with very Roman associations. The *flaminica* wore a *pallium* (a type of garment, perhaps a cloak), a dyed garment or veil, an *arculum* (a kind of headband), and a *fibula* (pin). For the commentator, Dido's *chlamys* signifies the *pallium*, the references to "Sidonian" and "purple" more generally the dyed veil, the gold-knotted hair the *arculum*; the *fibula* remains a *fibula*, but now the one that pins up the *flaminica*'s dress.

²¹In particular, the description of Aeneas' and Dido's luxurious dress has suggested to readers the figures of Antony and Cleopatra in Egypt.

Among her attributes, the *flaminica* seems to have worn a red or purple garment and a veil of some kind, perhaps similarly colored. Hersch writes that Festus draws a connection between the *flammeum*, or bridal veil (the color being most likely red or yellow) and the veil of the *flaminica*; Auctus calls the *flaminica*'s veil a *rica* and implies that it is purple.²² She may have had both kinds of veil, but the commentator does seem to be reaching for this interpretation in several places. The *arculum* was apparently worn by the *flaminica* in every sacrifice; it is said by the commentator to be made of *Punica mala* (pomegranate wood), but later in this same note he writes that it is gold, which fact Vergil implies by the description of Dido's hair being "knotted with gold."²³ According to the Auctus, Vergil's "*vestem*," moreover, is really a *rica*; the *rica*, although specifically a veil, could also more generally be described as a garment. The fact that multiple details of the flaminical garb are changed (name, color, perhaps material) suggests a somewhat forced effort to convey the particular view that Dido is here portrayed as a *flaminica* by Vergil. Auctus appears to attribute these changes to the trouble of using technical terms in an epic poem, which terms Vergil's subtle allusiveness nevertheless hints at: "Vergil, therefore, on account of the difficulty of the names and their meaning otherwise includes all things" (*Vergilius ergo propter nominum et intellectus difficultatem aliter omnia comprehendit*). Whether or not Vergil intended these allusions, it is clear that the Auctus text strives to stress Dido's

²² Hersch 75. Ramsay and Wayte write that the *flaminica* wore the *flammeum* and the *rica*, but are not sure as to the latter's nature (866). Hersch also notes that the *flammeum* of the *flaminica* may have been worn by a bride "as a kind of charm against divorce or ill luck [since the *flamen* could not divorce], or it might be that the *Flaminica* was meant to be viewed as a perpetual bride" (102). Such an association perhaps makes the suspected portrayal of Dido as *flaminica* even more inherently matrimonial.

²³ Gellius only writes that the *flaminica* wears a shoot (*surculum*) made from a "fruitful" or "favorable" tree (*arbore felici*) [10.15].

portrayal as the “*flaminica Dialis*” and, here, her adherence to the various attributes.

Whatever her sins, she at least has to dress the part for the allusion to be clear. Here in the commentary she is undoubtedly a *flaminica*.

Moreover, she is *flaminica* to Aeneas’ *flamen*. The next note focuses on the *flamen*’s attributes, as displayed by Aeneas. As I said above, the *flamen* was always in full dress, and the commentator uses Vergil’s descriptions of Aeneas, like he does for Dido, to find allusions to a *flamen*. At 4.262, before Mercury addresses Aeneas, the hero is described as having a jasper-studded sword (*ensis*) and *laena*, presents given to him by Dido. The *laena*, Auctus informs the reader, is “the double toga, in which the *flamines* sacrifice” (*togam duplicem in qua flamines sacrificant*). The bulk of the comment is devoted to describing the features of a *flamen* that Aeneas here shares, though the note does point out an etymological connection between Venus and the *laena* as well. It also briefly mentions that some see the cloak as “womanly” (*muliebrem*). In addition to underplaying this less flattering interpretation of Aeneas’ clothing by shifting the focus of the comment, the note also strengthens Dido’s association with the priesthood, and Aeneas’ connection to her, because the *laena* “ought to be woven by a *flaminica*” (*a flaminica texi oportere*), and here Vergil’s text indicates that it was given by Dido to Aeneas.

Preceding the interpretation of the *laena*, however, the commentator undercuts a similar unflattering view for the jasper: “But the skilled poet, as he describes the sheath of a luxurious lover, has also inserted other reasons why he said jasper” (*sed peritus poeta cum amatoris luxuriantis vaginam describit, alias etiam inseruit rationes, cum iaspidem dixerit*); namely, the gem’s connection to “those speaking in assembly” (*hanc gemmam contionantibus*

necessariam). While some see the jasper as a sign of luxury or effeminacy, Auctus lessens that charge by adding the fact that the material also has connections with politics and the Roman republic. This powerful political connotation lends Aeneas weight amidst the hostile Tyrians, and at a time when he is traditionally at his weakest as the duty-bound hero. According to Auctus, the sword also represents the *secespita*, a sacrificial knife carried by the *flamen*²⁴ and used by the other major priesthoods as well. As part of Vergil's allusiveness, "since it was not pleasing to make mention of the name itself...the sword therefore we ought to accept for a longer knife; 'studded,' moreover for 'fastened with bronze nails'" (*quoniam gratum non erat ipsius nominis facere mentionem...ensem ergo pro cultro longiore debemus accipere; stellatum autem pro 'clavis aeneis vinctum'*). Here, as with Dido, the commentator reaches for examples of this association with the flamine – can an *ensis* really be considered a "longer knife"? – but it is clear that, for the commentator, it is an association that needed including.

The fact that the *flamen* was inaugurated is also touched on. The commentator brings up the various ways Mercury is described as a bird when he flies and lands before Aeneas to deliver Jupiter's instructions: the messenger god is "shining with equal wings" (*paribus nitens...alis*), goes "similar to a bird" (*avi similis*), and "flies next to the water" (*volat aequora iuxta*).²⁵ In this interpretation the gods seem to approve Aeneas as *flamen* by forming part of an allusion to inauguration (*inaugurationis*). Though Aeneas will here decide to leave his *flaminica*, something typically not allowed, here he again is almost given special dispensation "with the auspices taken" (*auspicato*), according to Auctus. Mercury is a

²⁴ Ramsay and Wayte 865.

²⁵ Verg. *Aen.* 4.252, 254, 255.

bird of good omen who arrives to provide the *flamen* with promises of a fortunate future and, by implication, with allowance to leave his wife.

In addition to focusing on a visual association with the priestly couple, the commentator does not shy away from bringing up the marital connection, namely at 4.103 and 374. At 103, Juno makes the offer to Venus that Dido and Aeneas join and rule together. The exact meaning of the note in the Auctus text is obscure, but essentially deals with the different types of marriage Romans can enter into. *Flamines* had to be the product of a *confarreatio* marriage, and had to marry in that manner themselves.²⁶ Of the three ways a woman could enter into the power (*manus*) of her husband, *confarreatio* alone involved a religious ceremony.²⁷ Hersch writes that it was not a common practice by the end of the Republic, mentioned mostly in “antiquarian texts from the imperial period” (like Servius); however it was “inextricably tied to the major priesthoods of Rome,” specifically that of the three main *flamines*.²⁸ Another type of marriage, *coemptio*, was some sort of “symbolic sale” of the bride or a “mutual exchange.”²⁹ In this note, the commentator is trying to determine which of these types of marriage Dido and Aeneas celebrate. The word *servire* used by Juno (“may it be permitted for her to serve a Phrygian husband,” *liceat Phrygio servire marito*, 4.103) would seem to imply, some might say contemptuously so (*alii invidiose*), a kind of *coemptio*, since, as noted in Auctus, “the woman passes into the power of her husband and sustains thus the condition of free servitude” (*mulier in potestatem viri cedit atque ita sustinet [liberis] condicionem liberae servitutis*).

²⁶ Prescendi 449.

²⁷ Hersch 24.

²⁸ Ibid. 24-5. *Flamines* also presided over all *confarreatio* marriages, making the ceremony likely even more rare among the populace (Hersch 25).

²⁹ Ibid. 23-24.

Though the commentator says that Juno may allude to *coemptio*, he concludes that ultimately, Dido and Aeneas are joined in a “farreate marriage” (*farreatas nuptias*). The reference in Juno’s speech to Dido “entrusting the Tyrians as a dowry to [Venus’] hands” (*dotalisque tuae Tyrios permittere dextrae*, 4.104) is an indication of *manus* (which would work for either type of marriage). However, the commentary goes on to refer to the use of water and fire (*aqua et igni*). Fire and water were used in the wedding ritual(s), including at *confarreatio* ceremonies, though it is not clear exactly how.³⁰ Taking *manus* and fire and water together seems to indicate *confarreatio* in particular, at least to the commentator.³¹ The fire and water reference by Auctus must refer to the rain and lightning during the ‘ceremony’ of Dido and Aeneas in the cave. Indeed at 4.167 Servius relates this rain and lightning to the symbolic wedding practice (though interestingly, Auctus also mentions that “others” (*alii*) believe that lightning at a wedding is a bad omen). Whatever the case, the Auctus commentator concludes that Dido and Aeneas are being represented by Vergil as the flaminical couple at 4.103, despite references to other kinds of marriage. These notes indicate that Dido and Aeneas’ marriage is the kind celebrated by *flamines*, though there may be some doubts cast on the absolute legitimacy of the union by Juno’s choice of words and the meaning of the lightning. While he allows for some doubt, the commentator nonetheless legitimizes the relationship.

Along these same lines, Auctus refers again at 4.374 to Dido and Aeneas being married by *confarreatio* in the manner of the *flamen* and *flaminica*. The commentator is

³⁰ Hersch 183.

³¹ The thought process of the commentator remains obscure on this point. Perhaps the above allusions to *coemptio* are meant by Juno alone, not by Vergil, in keeping with the theory of the *alii* stated above where Juno is contemptuously referring to *coemptio*. Whatever the reasons, the commentator is not very forthcoming with them.

responding to a line in Dido's second and more furious speech to Aeneas before he departs, where she says, "I took you in, needy, cast out on my shore, and mad I placed you in part of my kingdom" (*eiectum litore, egentem/ excepi et regni demens in parte locavi*, 4.373-4). The word *locavi*, according to Auctus, refers to a ritual where the *flamen* and *flaminica* are seated on two chairs joined by sheepskin at their wedding, and when the bride is placed next to the groom, the word *locata* is used.³² Therefore, Dido's use of *locavi* inverts the roles of bride and groom, since she is the one who has done the placing, but Auctus does not discuss this, despite the fact that it would place Dido in charge of the wedding ceremony and thus perhaps make her more to blame for her failure in it. The commentator may allow some of Dido's focalization to come through: "which [ceremony] here Dido recalls, when she laments that she is deserted by Aeneas against the law of the marriage bed." These few notes show that their relationship is a marriage, at least according to Dido, but moreover, it seems, to Auctus as well – a very Roman, religious, if flawed, union. The commentator does not discuss a potential flaw in Dido's role in the marriage here, but his final flaminical note in book 4 will do just that.

The last two notes of this type in book 4 treat *flaminicae*, and therefore Dido rather than Aeneas. The first, at 4.518, is brief and again deals with the clothing-based restrictions of the *flaminica*. She is not allowed to have shoes made from the leather "from animals having died of natural causes, nor is it permitted that she be girded above the knee" (*de pecudibus sua sponte mortuis...neque supra genu succinctam esse*). Here, as Dido makes sacrifices

³² Festus and Plutarch both speak of the bride sitting on sheepskin at the wedding (Hersh 122). The ThLL cites several instances of a form of *loco* being used in a marital context, but this occasion in Auctus seems the only one to mention *confarreatio* specifically, or offer this explanation behind the term (ThLL vol. VII.2 s.v. *loco* 1560.17-30).

and prayers to the underworld deities, she has a bare foot and wears an “ungirt garment” (*exuta pedem; veste recincta*), all apparently in accordance with these rules. However, the next time the commentator talks of Dido as the priestess, it is a different story. Vergil describes her at 4.645-6, as she ascends to her pyre, as climbing “high steps” (*altos...gradus*).³³ The *flaminica*, according to Auctus here and Aulus Gellius, was not allowed to “climb a ladder of more than three steps, unless it was a Greek ladder, lest any part of her feet or legs be visible from underneath” (*scalas plus tribus gradibus nisi Graecas scandere non licebat, ne ulla pars pedum eius crurumve subter conspiceretur*). There are some confusing elements to the note, but a Greek ladder must be more like a set of stairs than a ladder – something that would prevent the legs of the *flaminica* being glimpsed. The Auctus text does not put forth the possibility that these steps were part of a Greek ladder, thereby allowing Dido no escape from this offense.

Auctus also says that Dido has committed a *piaculum* in addition to this error, the same word used in the case of Aeneas (the *flamen*) marrying twice – but of course, he did not commit one. This *piaculum* appears to have something to do with her pretence of participating in magic rites to Stygian Jove, whether because she does not observe them properly (as Auctus says, a transgression occurs “if anything was not observed in the rituals,” *siquid caeremoniis non fuerit observatum*) or because of their infernal nature is unclear. However, he strengthens the force of this transgression by further commenting about the earlier and primary one: “But in this place he [Vergil] declares rather fully that she has departed from the rite of the *flaminica*, when he speaks about the steps...for it is not able to be high which is climbed by only three steps” (*hoc vero loco plenius eam flaminicae*

³³ Some MSS. of Vergil read *rogos*; however, the text used by the commentator had *gradus*.

ritum excessisse declarat, ubi de gradibus loquitur...neque enim potest esse altum quod tribus tantum gradibus conscenditur). In this last note about Dido the *flaminica*, the commentator makes clear that the poet intended to show that Dido has failed in her flaminical duties. As in the first flaminical note in book 4, she is not absolved, and ultimately, she loses her status of *flaminica* as Aeneas departs her land.

Whatever the normal rules for the *flamen* and *flaminica* regarding the prohibition on divorce, separation, and remarriage, perhaps this flawed flaminical union reaches its necessary conclusion – Dido ceases to be a *flaminica*, while Aeneas sails away, still ultimately a pious *flamen*. Though their union may have been holy, one partner, at least, could not keep it so. The Auctus commentator uses the restrictions and attributes of *flamines* and *flaminicae* to prove that Aeneas and Dido are an example of them, but ultimately, in her last act, Dido casts them aside. Our last glimpse of Dido the priestess is of her allowing a potential glimpse of her legs, thereby proving that she has lost that role.

III.

These notes, taken together, are a complex treatment of Dido and Aeneas' relationship and their respective characters. The comments continuously yet problematically identify the two as *flamen* and *flaminica*. Dido is allowed some moments where her focalization comes out, and she is elevated to a high position beyond the queen of Carthage to Roman priestess, the duty-bound mate of Aeneas – but perhaps, like in the case of the ladder, she has ascended too high. Doomed from the start, she ultimately falls from the lofty position Auctus' notes have ascribed to her. Aeneas, meanwhile, is allowed to continue on, absolved from wrongdoing in his role as *flamen* from the very beginning of

the commentary on book 4. Sharrock's question about why the commentator assigns these particular roles to Aeneas and Dido still has ambiguous answers, and her positive assessment of what such a depiction means for Dido looks more uncertain. Does Dido's revered role as *flaminica* count for anything in the end, if she enters into it wrongly and leaves it wrongly? Aeneas, too, enters into this inauspicious union, and leaves it, seemingly against the rules – but he is given permission by Creusa and the commentator. Thomas writes that Servius “exhibits a consistently defensive attitude towards the character of Aeneas.”³⁴ Thomas' chapter does not differentiate between Servius' text and the material in Auctus, but this defensiveness seems to hold true for these notes in Auctus as well, even as he displays it with a theory Servius saw fit to remove from his own commentary. Aeneas is almost always defended against impiety and less-than-flattering interpretations; Dido is not, beyond the initial allotment of the role of *flaminica*. Their relationship may be a Roman, religious marriage, but it is a flawed union – and flawed for one half of the couple more than the other.

³⁴ Thomas 106.

CHAPTER 2: BEYOND BOOK 4, BEYOND FLAMINES

I.

Dido's story ends in book 4, but Aeneas' carries on, and he continues to be portrayed as a *flamen* and priest outside this book. An examination of these other notes, along with notes in book 4 that treat Dido in a religious context, will add to the understanding of Dido and Aeneas' flaminical portrayal in book 4 by offering further context from the commentary.

It makes a certain amount of sense that Aeneas would be portrayed as a priestly figure in the Auctus commentary (more immediately than it does for Dido). While Vergil himself may not have intended the specific allusions to *flamines* discussed in the last chapter or to any specific priest, the epithet *pius*, frequently applied to Aeneas, does give a devout and dutiful impression, as does his reverence for the gods' orders. The Ara Pacis, begun a few years after Vergil's death, shows a figure traditionally identified as Aeneas performing a sacrifice with veiled head. Such a depiction suggests that the idea of Aeneas-as-priest may have been present in the Augustan era. While this image on the Ara Pacis differs perhaps from the usual artistic representations of Aeneas,³⁵ it is still not unreasonable that a commentator might find allusions to more religious aspects in Vergil's representation of the character, even if the references to *flamines* seem strained. But why the *flamen* specifically, and how far does this priestly interpretation extend?

Outside book 4, there are a number of further references to *flamines*, several of which discuss the priesthood in conjunction with Aeneas. I shall not treat all these

³⁵ Rehak 191. Rehak also argues that the figure is Numa, not Aeneas, partly for this reason.

references, but only the ones that are most relevant.³⁶ The first note in Auctus to find an allusion to the *flamen* in Aeneas' character occurs at 1.179. At this point in Vergil's epic, Aeneas' men, having landed on Carthage's shores after the storm, are preparing grain for roasting and crushing. Auctus, having said that Vergil here touches on "pontifical law" (*ius pontificum*) goes on to explain a dietary restriction of the *flamen*: "*Flamines, moreover, were not permitted to touch fermented dough*" (*flamines autem farinam fermentatam contingere non licebat*). This restriction on fermented dough or yeast is also referred to by Festus and Gellius;³⁷ presumably it was in place, Ramsay and Wayte add, because "fermentation implies corruption."³⁸ The commentator appears to refer to this notion when he says, "When [Vergil] says 'grain corrupted by the water' and 'to roast, etc.,' what else does he show, than that those who brought forward the corrupted grain cooked the bread shortly thereafter, without yeast?" (*cum autem dicit 'Cererem corruptam undis' et 'torrere p.f. et f.s.', quid aliud ostendit, quam mox eos sine fermento panem coxisse, qui omnes fruges corruptas protulerunt?*). For Auctus at least, Aeneas (and seemingly his men) could not handle leavened dough and ate it without allowing it to rise,³⁹ serving to associate him with the *flamen*. As with many of Auctus' notes in this vein, there is nothing particularly unusual in Vergil's text that would warrant an explanation or discussion of *flamines*. Part of Auctus' agenda seems to be to show the flaminical nature of Aeneas.

At 1.305, Aeneas decides to explore his location at dawn, after "turning over many thoughts through the night" (*per noctem plurima volvens*). The note in Auctus is confusing,

³⁶ Some of these notes are found in Servius; however, I will treat these later in Chapter 3.

³⁷ Prescendi 449; Aul. Gel. 10.15.

³⁸ Ramsay and Wayte 866.

³⁹ *Non autem expectasse eos fermentum*; "(that) moreover, they don't wait for fermentation..." (Serv. Auct. Aen. 1.179).

but seems to do with the *apex*, the special cap the *flamen* wore.⁴⁰ Again, seemingly unprompted by the text itself (especially considering that the word *apex* is not even found in Vergil at this point, only the epithet *pius*), Auctus makes mention of the restrictions on *flamines*. The commentator writes: “He wishes to show, therefore, that it was not permitted for the *flamen* to put the *apex* on while outside the bounds of the pomerium after sunset” (*vult ostendere igitur, flameni extra medium pomerium post solis occasum apicem ponere non licere*). This note, and the following examples, make clear that, according to Auctus, the *flamen Dialis* is not permitted to be without his *apex* at dark while outside the city; this specific variation of the cap-based restrictions seems only to be found in Auctus. In this interpretation, Aeneas is therefore shown in Vergil as bareheaded during the day, and afraid (lest he be caught without his cap) at sunset. Whatever the specifics, the commentator clearly presents Aeneas as obeying these restrictions – there is no hint that he has committed any wrong. What makes this note particularly interesting is one rule that Auctus does not mention: the *flamen Dialis* was likely not permitted to be outside the city limits at all,⁴¹ and Aeneas is most definitely outside Rome when he is in northern Africa. It

⁴⁰ Or rather, a part of the cap (*pilleum*) that often stood in for the entire thing (Holstein 54-55).

⁴¹ Especially in any kind of military capacity. This restriction is cited by Livy: “it was unspeakable for the *flamen Dialis* to stay a single night outside the city” (*flamini Diali noctem unam manere extra urbem nefas est*), which sentiment he echoes soon after [5.52]. Aulus Gellius has the similar rule that the *flamen* was not to be away from his bed for more than three nights (10.15). Ramsay and Wayte write that this rule of absentia was relaxed during the imperial period so that one might be able to be absent two nights from the city “with the consent of the *pontifex maximus*,” according to Tacitus (865). Tacitus also relates a story where a Tiberian-era *flamen Dialis* argues that the restriction on travel never really existed; previous *flamines Dialis* who were prevented from leaving Italy were the victim of “private enmities” (*privatis...simulatibus*) (Ann. 3.58). Gellius also mentions a general loosening of some rules. Szemler concludes that “there is no evidence that *flamines* could ever leave for a command during the Republic” (97, nt. 3).

would appear that Auctus has presupposed the theory of Aeneas-as-*flamen*, and does all he can to make Vergil's text fit the theory. From references in Auctus to *quidam* and *alii*, the theory of Aeneas-as-*flamen* must have been proposed by previous scholars (and perhaps challenged by others as well);⁴² the commentator, moreover, seeks to defend it, and Aeneas. Aeneas is a *flamen* but has not yet reached the city for which he is priest; however, the *flamen* cannot be outside the city, so a rule is found (or invented) which applies to a situation that would rarely, if ever, have occurred for a real *flamen*. Aulus Gellius, for example, only says that the *flamen* cannot be out under the sky without his cap (*sine apice sub divo esse licitum non est*).⁴³ Auctus grasps at straws in order to defend Aeneas and this particular allusive interpretation of his character.

It is clear that Aeneas, according to Auctus, is being portrayed as a *flamen* by Vergil, even when he seems to be breaking the rules. Another strain of Auctus' defensive criticism is an attempt to broaden Aeneas' identification as *flamen*, particularly in two post-book 4 instances (8.552 and 11.76) where he seeks to defend him against the suspicion of breaking a rule particular to *flamines*. The first example of this tactic occurs at 1.706, however; when Vergil describes the servants "burdening" (*onerent*) the tables for the feast at the Carthaginian court, Auctus finds a reference to a rite where an "empty table" (*mensa inanis*) was never placed before the *flamen*. At the end of this note, the commentator writes, "what else does [Vergil] show than that an empty table was not placed before Aeneas, whom everywhere he introduces as having had all priesthoods?" (*quid aliud ostendit, quam mensam*

⁴² 1.706, 4. 262, 4.646. See Chapter 3, section 2 for a fuller discussion of these instances.

⁴³ Aul. Gel. 10.15. He also writes that the *flamen* was just recently granted permission to go without his *apex* indoors (10.15), but there is no mention of time of day or broader location.

vacuam non antepositam Aeneae, quem ubique omnia sacerdotia inducit habuisse?). Whereas at 4.262 the commentator writes “it must nevertheless be known that in this union of Dido and Aeneas Vergil everywhere presents a *flamen* in the character of Aeneas, and a *flaminica* in that of Dido” (*sciendum tamen in hac conventione Aeneae atque Didonis ubique Vergilium in persona Aeneae flaminem, in Didonis flaminicam praesentare*), and consistently presents Aeneas as such in notes that mention *flamines*, he here expands this identification for Aeneas’ character, while keeping the bulk of the note specific to the *flamen* identification. Despite talking specifically about *flamines* in this note, he nevertheless mentions that Aeneas has “all priesthoods.”⁴⁴

The last of these ‘broadening’ notes is in line with other instances where Aeneas is absolved. At 11.76, Aeneas places a robe given to him by Dido on Pallas’ body at the funeral. For Auctus, the line is once again an allusion to the rituals of the *flamines*. Along the lines of the *flamen* not touching things that are corrupted (or corrupting), “the *flamen* was not permitted to touch a dead body unless one,⁴⁵ but Aeneas killed many men afterwards” (*flamini enim nisi unum mortuum non licet tangere, sed Aeneas plurimos postea*

⁴⁴ In book 4, he only does something like this once, where he says, “Here, therefore, Vergil secretly embraced all things said above in Aeneas, whom he wishes to understand as holy”; *hic ergo Vergilius in Aenea, quem sacratum intellegere vult, omnia supra dicta latenter amplexus est* (262), referring to a broader definition of Aeneas as ‘holy’. Even here, however, the commentator has been discussing matters particular to *flamines*, and immediately continues to do so. It is also true that Auctus does sometimes use the word *pontifex* or related form to refer to Aeneas (for example, “For in the ancient religion of the *pontifices* it was taught that the garment for an inaugurated *flamen*...”; *veteri enim religione pontificum praecipiebatur inaugurato flamine vestem...* (262). These seem to be a different case, however, in which he begins by referring to pontifical law in general, and then specifies – the *flamen*. In these places and at 1.706, they do not seem to form part of a defense.

⁴⁵ If even that – Aulus Gellius goes further, declaring that the *flamen* “never touches a dead body, though it is not a religious offence [for him] to attend a funeral” (*mortuum numquam attingit; funus tamen exequi non est religio*) [10.15].

occidit). Aeneas might be permitted to touch Pallas' corpse, but no more bodies than that, a problem for a man who is also a soldier in the midst of a war. The commentator makes the rather bizarre point that "it is one thing to kill in war, another to touch a dead body" (*sed aliud est in bello occidere, aliud mortuum tangere*). The idea that Aeneas would not be touching dead bodies while fighting, or that such contact does not count, is faintly absurd; yet, it is offered as an excuse here in Auctus. The commentator goes out of his way to reassure the reader of the connection, even when Aeneas seems to break a rule. He also assures the reader that, despite this seeming error of Aeneas having encountered many dead bodies "every kind of priesthood is attributed to Aeneas" (*sciendum est tamen, Aeneae omne genus sacerdotii tribui*); as above, despite specifically discussing *flamines* in this note, he ends by broadening out the attribution – in effect, lessening the weight of the original identification at a point where it becomes problematic, while still alluding and clinging to that original identification. It is another form of defense for Aeneas' character.

The commentator enacts this defensive tactic more fully at 8.552, a note tangentially related to the discussion in 1.305, in that it briefly touches upon a *flamen's* departure from the city. First Aeneas receives a "choice horse" (*ex[s]ortem*) from the Etruscans. However, it is forbidden for a *flamen* to touch or ride a horse;⁴⁶ Auctus even defines *exortem* as "unlawful" (*exlegem*). Of this seeming violation, Auctus writes: "And many blame Vergil in this place, because, when everywhere he shows Aeneas as priest (*pontifex*), it is not permitted even for *pontifices* to be carried on a horse, but on a chariot" (*et multi hoc loco reprehendunt Vergilium, quod, cum Aeneam ubique pontificem ostendat, et pontificibus non liceat equo vehi, sed curru*). The commentator first deflects blame from

⁴⁶ Prescendi 449 (cites Plin. NH 28.146, Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 40.274b-e, Festus 71 L).

Aeneas, making it rather *Vergil's* potential mistake (but one that he will soon explain away). He also refers to the restriction on horses as being “pontifical” rather than pertaining specifically to *flamines*. He goes on to write: “The following reason for this thing is given: Aeneas was both experienced and foremost not only in pontifical law, but in all sacred things; Vergil, moreover, with an opportunity found, relates the ritual of Roman ceremonies” (*cuius rei haec redditur ratio: Aeneam non tantum pontificii iuris, sed omnium sacrorum et peritum et primum fuisse, Vergilium autem inventa occasione ritum Romanorum caerimoniarum exponere*), which statement further broadens out the attribution. It is as if Auctus wishes to assure the reader that, even if Aeneas seems not to follow the rules of the flamine here, he does know what he is doing; he is well-versed in holy matters and is a priest. The commentator then talks of the *flamines Martialis* and *Quirinalis* in particular to reconcile the flaminical theory as best he can. Auctus widens Aeneas’ identification at a troublesome point for the interpretation of Aeneas as *flamen Dialis*. The other *flamines* were not held to the same standard, and did not have to comply with the same exacting restrictions that the *flamen Dialis* had to: “if it was permitted for them to go into the province, then it was also permitted to be carried on a horse without taboo” (*si ire eis in provinciam licebat, et equo sine religione vehi licuit*). The *flamen Martialis* or *Quirinalis* could seemingly leave the city and ride horseback, as Aeneas does at this point in the narrative.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Szemler does note instances where the other two major *flamines* were prevented from leaving the city on command by the *pontifex maximus* (a *flamen Martialis* in the 3rd century B.C., and a *flamen Quirinalis* in 189 B.C.) (96-98). However, here Auctus at least does attribute this power to them: “it was permitted for them to be away from Italy’s borders” (*abesse eis a finibus Italiae licebat*), in contrast to the *flamen Dialis*, as the commentator says. The *flamen Dialis* from Tacitus’ *Annals* mentioned in note 41 argues for a provincial command along similar lines (that the other *flamines maiores* have had provinces given to

Since Aeneas represents every priesthood, this extension does not conflict with his flaminical portrayal, despite the fact that throughout book 4, Auctus has quite clearly associated Aeneas with the *flamen Dialis* in particular. Of the notes that connect Aeneas to the *flamen Dialis* to some degree or other, this one alone does not absolve Aeneas from a ‘mistake’ within the bounds of the *flamen Dialis* identification. The notes previously discussed which allude to Aeneas having more or all priesthoods, while putting into play the concept of an expanded role, do not use it so explicitly to absolve him. This note bends and expands the idea in order to defend a “pontifical” (flaminical) Aeneas at all costs.

Auctus had defended Aeneas from the fault of remarriage by alluding to the allowance Creusa gave to him to take another wife. A similar defense occurs here at 8.552. Evander gives him special dispensation of a sort to have a horse and leave ‘Rome’s’ borders: “[Evander] urges Aeneas, with an excuse introduced, that he take charge of the Etruscans, who lack a king and leader” (*excusatione interposita hortatur Aenean, ut Etruscis, regem et ducem desiderantibus, praesit*); with this instruction, Auctus says, Aeneas could rightly enter a province and have a horse.⁴⁸ Even while expanding the image of Aeneas to include all priests, he nonetheless focuses on the *flamines* and reacts to the description of Aeneas being given a horse as if we should be reading Aeneas as the *flamen Dialis*, and need reassuring that he is acting properly. Aeneas may be represented as all different kinds of priests in the commentary (and to search out and treat all such possible instances is outside the scope of this thesis), but there is a definite emphasis on the *flamen Dialis*.

them in the past, and that the *flamen Dialis* is subject to only the same laws as they are in this case; Ann. 3.58).

⁴⁸ “Therefore he could make use of a horse rightly as well” (*ergo et equo merito uti potuit*).

Readers of Vergil and the Servian commentary are left to wonder – if the identification with the *flamen* is to become so stretched and muddled, why identify Aeneas as such in the first place? Thomas writes that “one of Servius’ central thematic preoccupations has to do with the ethical status of Aeneas – he is a *vir fortis*, a ‘hero’” (100). Thomas goes on to discuss several examples from the commentary of this heroic preoccupation, from both Servius and the commentator of the Auctus material. One finds an interesting example of this identification at 10.270 in Auctus, commenting on a line where a fiery Aeneas (literally so) approaches the enemy in his ships. On Vergil’s use of the phrase *apex capiti* he writes: “through the *apex* he makes mention of both a priest and a hero” (*et sacerdotis per apicem et viri fortis facere mentionem*). Though he uses the generalizing term *sacerdos* here, he does specifically discuss the wearing of the *apex* by *flamines* directly after this comment. In the midst of the heroic vision of a fiery Aeneas, Vergil slips in a sly reference to his flaminical status as well – at least according to the commentator. Aeneas’ status as a hero and his identity as a priest can coexist.

The qualities of Aeneas as a hero are related to his qualities as a leader, and the commentator could understandably wish to show that Aeneas embodies all aspects of a leader – military, political, and religious. The example at 10.270 decidedly portrays Aeneas in military fashion, and there are explicit examples in Vergil of Aeneas as a martial and political leader. He guides and commands his men both in relative peace before the wars in Latium and during the wars themselves; he himself fights in battle. An identification of Aeneas as an actual priest is not to be found in Vergil, though Aeneas is portrayed as *pious*. This last type of leader is more difficult to prove with explicit examples from the text, so it

might therefore receive more emphasis in the commentary. A vigorous, reaching defense of Aeneas as a priest would then make sense. Indeed, the highest concentration of notes connecting Aeneas to a *flamen* occurs in book 4, when he is traditionally at his weakest as a pious hero and leader, having temporarily forsaken his duty. At this point he enters (according to Auctus) into an extremely Roman and religious marriage with Dido/*flaminica*, who takes on her religious role in the commentary ostensibly to help Aeneas keep his. This marriage can thereby be a factor in Aeneas' heroic priestliness, in giving him the proper marriage expected of a *flamen* rather than some illicit affair, but it ultimately contributes to Dido's failure at being a respectable and religious 'Roman' woman.

As to why a *flamen* in particular, perhaps the sheer amount of attributes and restrictions may play a role. As stated above, the flamine was one of the most ancient priesthoods, and had the most restrictions on behavior of any Roman priest. The *flamen* was expected always to be a priest, not just at times of sacrifice. If Aeneas is to be a Roman hero *par excellence* in the Servian commentary, why not make him the most pious, most dutiful priest in Rome?⁴⁹ He becomes the first example of one of Rome's most ancient priesthoods. Naturally, this interpretation would start to pose problems when Aeneas seems to deviate from the role and restrictions of the *flamen* (understandably so, since Vergil himself, in all probability, does not intend the allusions and does not share Auctus'

⁴⁹ Szeidler notes that though the *flamen Dialis* and *rex sacrorum* were ancient priesthoods and were theoretically "of the highest rank in the college of the *pontifices*" they eventually became subordinate and under the control of the *pontifex maximus*. However, the position would likely have retained its honor, if only ceremonially and not in actual influence (76-77). Gellius quotes Marcus Varro, who speculates that a reason for the white cap of the *flamen Dialis* is the fact that he is the greatest (*maximus*) [10.15].

concerns with Aeneas' adherence to these particular rules). Such instances only lead the commentator to mount a stronger defense of the theory. The association with *flamines* is especially problematic, as the myriad restrictions that make for a pious priest (being unable to leave the city or touch the dead, for example) also make him a priest typically unable to hold office or wage war; Gellius writes that *flamines* were rarely consuls.⁵⁰ Auctus sacrifices absolute consistency to make Aeneas a complete hero who can exemplify a military, political, and religious leader all at once. In actual practice, the *flamen's* status as priest is based in large part on his adherence to the set of strict rules linked with the priesthood. However, Auctus explains away occasions where Aeneas is not quite the perfect *exemplum* of a *flamen*. Instances that might reflect badly on the hero (such as his *flaminica* Dido's rule-breaking) are ignored. In order to make Aeneas a perfect leader in every way by adding to his character the role of the highly dutiful *flamen*, the commentator must offer excuses for the times he is not a perfect priest – an odd, paradoxical interpretation. If Aeneas is not a *flamen*, then he needs no defending in these places. But for Auctus, Aeneas is always a hero, and so always a priest, always a *flamen*. He simply has to be. Such an all-encompassing view of Aeneas' leadership has relevance to the contemporary hero at the time of the *Aeneid's* composition – Augustus. I will discuss this association further in my conclusion.

II.

While Aeneas' role is expanded and the rules bent in order to make him a very pious priest, we have seen that Dido is less vigorously defended. Though references to Dido as a *flaminica* cannot be found outside the book where the majority of her story takes

⁵⁰ "The *flamen Dialis* was rarely made consul" (*rarenter flamen Dialis creatus consul est*) – especially since he cannot look at an army in array (Aul. Gel. 10.15). It was not a politically advantageous priesthood.

place, there are moments within book 4 where she is present in a religious context, and as such, these places are worth examining to see if the commentator connects Dido more generally to priestly things in the way that he does for Aeneas. One such place occurs at 4.58, where she sacrifices to various gods (Ceres, Apollo, Bacchus, Juno) before her union with Aeneas. There is extra material in Auctus, but most of what is said is repeated in rephrased and condensed form by Servius. Sharrock notes that both commentaries say that it is as if (*quasi*) “Dido is sacrificing for her marriage...[one] potentially for the benefit of her people,” since each of these gods is connected with cities and/or marriage. This more or less positive depiction could be construed as the commentator allowing for Dido’s focalization to come through.⁵¹ Both ancient commentators, however, also allow the possibility that she is appeasing deities who are contrary to marriage.⁵² There does not seem to be any particularly negative judgment in this proposal in Servius’ condensed account, for these gods would be hostile to all marriages, not just Dido’s. Auctus seems initially more negative: “Dido invokes these gods badly, then, (concerning) the marriage she wishes for herself with Aeneas” (*male ergo invocat hos Dido, quae sibi nuptias optat Aeneae*).⁵³ He concludes, however, with the same thought as Servius; namely, that people must sacrifice to adverse gods to placate them, as well as to propitious ones. Neither commentator ascribes Dido any sort of priestly role in these sacrifices, as a *flaminica* or otherwise. She is only a woman sacrificing hopefully to the gods– perhaps rightly, perhaps not.

⁵¹ Sharrock 21. The Latin in both commentaries reads: *quasi nuptura pro utilitate rei publicae*.

⁵² *Contrarios* (Auctus); *adversos* (Servius). Ceres, on account of Proserpina’s snatching (Auctus adds her spurned marriage to Jupiter), Apollo because he never had a wife, and Bacchus “who could not have a spouse except by snatching one” (*qui nisi raptam coniugem habere non potuit*; Serv.); Auctus adds he only had illicit liaisons (*stupra*) with Bacchantes).

⁵³ This particular theory about Dido appeasing contrary deities is introduced with *alii*, but this word does not preclude Auctus’ agreement with the idea.

The notes on 4.453 and 458 chiefly consist of material preserved in Auctus. The first treats the ill omens Dido receives at the altars as Aeneas prepares to depart. Apart from connecting these signs to the “augural discipline” (*augurali disciplina*), the commentator again does not ascribe any priesthood to Dido herself. The note primarily discusses the negativity of the omens. At 4.458, Dido visits the temple she had build to Sychaeus. Servius is fairly neutral in noting the bridal nature of Dido’s reverence to her old husband by placing wool and garlands on his altar, as a new bride would.⁵⁴ Servius also indicates that Sychaeus may still be loved by Dido, saying that the *antiqui* of Vergil’s *antiqui coniugis* could mean “dear” (*cari*) in addition to “former.” Auctus goes on to allude to Dido’s vow to Sychaeus, and her later regret (*poenitentia*) at not keeping it. Auctus then discusses Roman marriage traditions further, adding that sometimes the doorposts of the bride were smeared with the fat (*unguen*) of a she-wolf. Though there is an opportunity to mention the *flaminica*’s restriction on remarrying, as he did at 4.29, the commentator instead moves from this mention of the she-wolf to say that this animal, too, was not joined to any other if her first “husband” (*marito*) died.⁵⁵ Perhaps he does not wish to repeat the exact same information that he had introduced earlier. Dido is again placed in the context of Roman marital traditions, but here only to emphasize the breaking of her vow. None of these notes connect her with the *flaminica* or any other priestesses (though Dido is involved in religious rites), even when an opportunity to do so presents itself. The portrayal of Dido-as-priestess may not be quite as prevalent as Aeneas-as-priest, but perhaps that is to be

⁵⁴ There is some shared material here with Auctus.

⁵⁵ The commentator takes line 4.550 of the *Aeneid* as “proof” that Vergil intended this idea: *non licuit thalami expertem sine crimine vitam degere more ferae (id est lupae, Auctus adds).*

expected. If anything else can be gleaned from these specific comments, Auctus does come across as slightly more overtly disapproving of Dido than Servius does.

Sharrock, in her article, states that the Servian commentary, especially Servius, often has a more sympathetic portrayal of Dido and her union with Aeneas than one might expect from an ancient source, and she cites several flaminical notes from book 4 as an example, despite the fact that these supposedly favorable notes are in Auctus, not Servius. While these notes do seem to place Dido and Aeneas in a very Roman, if flawed, union, Dido's part appears less strong than at first glance. Aeneas' role as *flamen* and priest extends far beyond book 4, both before and after his liaison with Dido, where he is consistently defended against all wrongdoing. It is as if in portraying Aeneas as a priest, Dido is inevitably caught up in that depiction; if Aeneas is a *flamen*, then the closest that any woman comes to being his *flaminica* is Dido. She must play this part if Aeneas' dalliance with her is to be elevated (for the sake of him and his portrayal as priest) and exculpated. The *flaminica's* position is inextricably linked to her husband, and Dido's role here serves Aeneas' status.⁵⁶ But from the first mention of her as such, she is condemned to fail in her duties. She is not absolved from her religious errors, as Aeneas is. If the portrayal of the couple as *flamen* and *flaminica* is to have something to do with some sort of sympathy on the part of a commentator, then judging by these notes alone, Servius is the more sympathetic in leaving them out.⁵⁷ Though Auctus legitimates the marriage, he does so at the further expense of Dido's honor. Her role is in service to Aeneas' – as pious Roman *flamen* and priest, whose any sins are not merely forgiven, but not sins at all.

⁵⁶ Hersch 283.

⁵⁷ Servius does not completely exculpate Dido of all wrongdoing, however.

CHAPTER 3: SERVIUS VS. AUCTUS AND SECRET VERGIL

I.

Seeking out subtle references to aspects of a specific Roman priesthood in descriptions of Aeneas and Dido may seem a strange exercise, whatever the motives of the commentator in doing so. However, the notes found in the Servius Auctus commentary represent part of a larger scholarly tradition that ascribes arcane religious knowledge to Vergil. The character of Praetextatus in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* asserts that Vergil often references Roman ritual in the *Aeneid*, unbeknownst to the casual reader.⁵⁸ The commentator Hyginus, writing roughly in the time of Augustus, often critiqued Vergil for perceived mistakes in such religious references,⁵⁹ and Zetzel writes that Probus, another commentator of the 1st century A.D., "in general, made use of the same criteria as his predecessors, namely aesthetic and religious grounds" in analyzing the work of Vergil.⁶⁰ Even within a generation after his death, commentators were concerned with painting Vergil as knowledgeable in religious matters, a tradition which continued at least up until the fifth-century *Saturnalia*. Whatever time the writer of the expanded material in the Servian commentary was writing, this theory would have been present among Vergilian scholars. As an example of this general attribution, Auctus' note at 2.57 reads: "Indeed it has often been said that Vergil, with an occasion having been found, makes mention of pontifical law in any character" (*sane saepe dictum est, Vergilium inventa occasione mentionem iuris pontificalis facere in quacumque persona*). As Starr observes, the idea that "Vergil presents

⁵⁸ Jones 222.

⁵⁹ Zetzel 31, 36.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 51.

Aeneas as extraordinarily knowledgeable about religious matters...might or might not imply that the reader thought of [Aeneas] as holding a priesthood.”⁶¹

A specific strain of this theory – that Aeneas was a *flamen Dialis* – occurs throughout the Auctus commentary. Though other characters are occasionally afforded some association with the flamine as well, none receive the treatment to the same extent as the hero. Dido receives the second most notes on this identification, but her role is inextricably linked with Aeneas’. Anchises (3.607) and Ascanius (2.683) are associated with the priesthood, but they are also connected to the hero. In Auctus’ note on 2.57, Priam seems to be linked with the *flamen*. Starr cites an example of Amata being linked with the *flaminica* (or at least her clothing) at 12.602 in the Auctus commentary. While this shows perhaps a general interest in the flamine, these one-time associations may simply be examples of the larger theory that Vergil was well-versed in archaic religious knowledge, including knowledge about *flamines*. The extent and force to which Aeneas (and to some degree, Dido) are associated with the flamine indicates something greater at work than the single reference these other characters receive.

II.

As indicated above, Praetextatus in the *Saturnalia* credits Vergil with allusions to ritual which the layman would find obscure: “the profound knowledge of this poet is often to be found in a word which the common man would think said by chance.”⁶² The idea of

⁶¹ Starr 64. Starr and Zetzel note that Servius does occasionally comment on religious matters, but the strongest examples are found in Auctus. Jones writes: “unlike Praetextatus, on the other hand, [the Auctus commentator] at times becomes so obsessed with the idea of Vergil’s knowledge of obscure religious matters that he finds evidence for this knowledge where none exists” (223).

⁶² Macrob. *Sat.* 3.2.7.

this ‘secret text’ of Vergil is also found in Auctus’ notes on *flamines*. At 8.552, the commentator says something quite similar to Praetextus: “Nevertheless it must be known that the poet was content to touch upon all pontifical law, while he narrates something else” (*sciendum tamen poetam contentum esse universum ius pontificale, dum aliud narrat, attingere*). Vergil, then, employs allegory, and the flaminical theory becomes an allegorical reading that the commentators are trying to recover and lay out for their readers.⁶³ Auctus’ note at 1.305 implies something similar: “But these things and similar sufficed for Vergil to indicate his learning in all disciplines...” (*sed haec Vergilio et his similia sufficiunt ad indicandum omnium disciplinarum scientiam*). Though this note is primarily about *flamines*, the comment not only assigns great knowledge (in *all* disciplines) to Vergil, but indicates that he is extremely allusive and allegorical, only needing to touch upon these things for his true knowledge to shine through (to the equally-knowledgeable commentator, at least). In addition, regarding the similarities between Dido’s dress and that of a *flaminica* at 4.137, Vergil, according to Auctus, uses names for items other than the proper ones (*chlamys* in Vergil, for example, instead of the *pallium* of the *flaminica*), “on account of the difficulty of the names and their meaning” (*propter nominum et intellectus difficultatem*). Auctus implies that Vergil does know these terms, but cannot use them here, either because the casual reader might be confused, or because such words are not suited for poetry; again, he must be allusive. The commentary also uses the word “secretly” (*latenter*) in two notes on *flamines* 1.179 and 4.262. For the latter note, Auctus writes that “here, therefore, Vergil secretly embraced all things [pertaining to *confarreatio* and *flamines*] said above in regards to Aeneas,

⁶³ Allegorical in the modern sense, if not in the ancient. See Jones for an overview of types of allegory in the commentary tradition, and particularly in the Servian commentary. Jones terms the religious notes, such as those dealing with *flamines*, as a kind of allegory.

whom he wants [us] to understand as consecrated” (*hic ergo Vergilius in Aenea, quem sacratum intellegere vult, omnia supra dicta latenter amplexus est*).

Often commentators include opinions that weren’t necessarily theirs, but were simply listed amongst various interpretations for a specific word or line.⁶⁴ Starr remarks that “it is impossible to estimate the [flaminical] interpretation’s popularity: the Servian tradition often identifies it as the view of ‘some people’ [*quidam* or *alii*, usually], with a vagueness that is typical of the way ancient commentaries cite others’ views.”⁶⁵

Nevertheless, there are indications that however popular this specific incarnation of the theory that Vergil was religiously allusive, the Auctus commentator believed in it. As I have argued, the sheer amount of times the flaminical interpretation is brought up, especially in book 4 (and often seemingly unprompted by an actual textual issue), as well as the lengths the commentator goes to explicate certain notes and defend Aeneas as a *flamen*, imply that he was an adherent of this view. He also outright states his agreement in places. Phrases such as “who would doubt [that]” (*quis dubitet*) or “what else [is this/does this show]...than” (*quid aliud est/ostendit...quam*)⁶⁶ indicate his belief that in these spots Vergil’s words allude to aspects of the *flamen*. Also at 4.103 and 4.137, the commentator concludes his note by saying that it “must be known” (*sciendum*) that “everywhere” (*ubique*) Vergil portrays Aeneas/Dido as the *flamen/flaminica*. Similar language is used at 1.706, 8.552, and 11.76 to attribute all priesthoods to Aeneas.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of how the Servian commentary treats grammatically ambiguous readings, see Thomas 112-116.

⁶⁵ Starr 64. In regards to the flaminical interpretation, Auctus uses *alii* and *quidam* at 4.262 and *quidam* at 4.646, and more generally of a ‘priestly’ interpretation at 1.706 (*quidam*).

⁶⁶ Serv. Auct. Aen. 4.137; 4.103, 137, 1.179.

The note at 8.552, moreover, uses the gerundive *sciendum* to ensure that the reader believes in Vergil's tendency to secretly allude to matters of Roman religion. Auctus also appears to defend Vergil's religiosity against criticisms (like Hyginus') leveled at some perceived mistake. At 8.552 again, he writes that "many" (*multi*) blame Vergil in letting Aeneas ride a horse contrary to the restrictions imposed on *flamines*, but the commentator then shows why this description is not blameworthy. As stated above, if Vergil uses the wrong names for items of flaminical dress, it is only due to his penchant for referring to the real things allusively and the strictures of poetical vocabulary. It is not only Aeneas, but also Vergil who is absolved of errors in the Auctus commentary.

III.

It is clear that Servius does not share this line of thinking with the Auctus commentator, even though he did have access to his notes. Servius does occasionally comment that Vergil shows Aeneas as having special religious knowledge,⁶⁷ but of the "most commonly mentioned theory" that Aeneas is presented as the *flamen Dialis*, he makes no mention.⁶⁸ The only time Servius even seems to allude to this argument is at 4.19, where he briefly elaborates on Dido's use of *culpae* in referring to her new love, saying that it has to do with twice-married women being barred from priesthood (*sacerdotio*). He nowhere else associates Dido with any priesthood at all, and even here he does not mention *flaminicae*. Indeed, the Harvard edition of the Servian text includes a detail here mentioned by Auctus but not Servius; after *sacerdotio*, Auctus adds "that is, they [twice-married women] do not crown Fortuna Muliebris" (*id est Fortunam muliebrem non*

⁶⁷ Starr 64, on Serv. Aen 6.366.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 65.

coronabant)⁶⁹. Auctus (and presumably Servius as well) is apparently referring to a different priesthood here, albeit one that shares a characteristic in common with the flamine. In general, however, Servius shows that this restriction, whatever priesthood it alludes to, deserves no more discussion than a brief, offhand reference. In the notes where the Auctus commentary discusses the *flamen* or *flaminica*, no trace of that discussion finds its way into Servius' own notes. At 4.262 for example, Servius explains the term *laena* as the "double toga" just as Auctus does, but he attributes the garment to the augurs, while Auctus writes that the *flamines* wear it. When worn in a religious context, the garment is in fact better attributed to *flamines* than augurs. Indeed, the passage in Servius is the only example of the garment being associated with augurs.⁷⁰ Whenever Servius does mention *flamines* or some aspect of their life, his comments never serve to associate Aeneas or Dido with the priesthood. At 1.448, when Vergil describes the "bronze thresholds" (*aerea...limina*) of the Carthaginian temple to Juno, Servius comments that the doorways are bronze "either because the ancients used bronze more, or because this material is fitting for religion; indeed the *flamen Dialis* was shorn by bronze knives" (*vel quod aes magis veteres in usu habebant, vel quod religioni apta est haec materies, denique flamen Dialis aereis cultris tondebatur*). The reference to the *flamen* serves only to provide an example of bronze as a material suitable for religious purposes; both the line of Vergil and Servius' note are unconnected to Aeneas' characterization in particular.

Similarly, at 7.190 and 8.664 there is no association made between Aeneas and the aspect of the *flamen* under discussion. The note at 7.190 (on a mention of a statue of Picus

⁶⁹ Stocker and Travis 257.

⁷⁰ ThLL vol. VII.2 s.v. *laena* 870.21-29.

and his mythical background) has barely anything to do with *flamines*. Picus, Servius informs the reader, was changed into a woodpecker of Mars by a jealous Circe, after he married Pomona. This bird was associated with augury, and so the statue of Picus is wisely (*bene*) given a staff (*lituum*) to link him with the regalia of an augur. The *ancile* and *trabea* are items shared with the *flamines Dialis* and *Martialis* according to Servius, and so would presumably not have been distinctive enough. In fact, Servius does not even use the word *flamen* here (though it is clear that is what he means), instead saying the “priest” of Jupiter and Mars (*Diali vel Martiali sacerdote*). Vergil may touch on religious ritual here, but not the *flamen* theory. Furthermore, Vergil specifically refers to “wooly *apices*” (*lanigerosque apices*) in a religious context at 8.664 – they feature on Vulcan’s shield and come after mentions of the *Salii* and *Luperci*. Servius’ note simply explains what the *apex* was and what priesthood Vergil is referencing in this line; Aeneas is not brought up in any capacity.

The closest Servius comes to connecting Aeneas to the flamine is at 2.683. When the top (*apex*) of Ascanius’ head catches fire as the family prepares to leave Troy, Servius connects this word to the *apex* of the *flamen*, and Ascanius’ supposed establishment of the priesthood at Alba Longa.⁷¹ Nowhere explicitly does he associate Aeneas himself with the *apex*, and indeed if the priesthood was first (*primum*) set up by Ascanius during his rule, then Aeneas could not have been a *flamen*. Auctus includes this detail of Ascanius establishing the flamine, too, but does not comment on the potential inference that Aeneas then would not have been a *flamen*; he does not always treat every implication of the theory. It may be the rare note that worked well enough for either commentator – it strongly associates Aeneas’ son with the priesthood (like his father, if one believes Auctus’

⁷¹ Starr 65-66.

theory), but has a basis in simple historical fact; each commentator focuses on a different feature. The bulk of Servius' note is about the story of young Servius Tullius, whose head similarly caught fire as a good omen.⁷² It might also be worth noting that Auctus has slightly more than Servius here on the religious explanation of *apices*, but again, there is no specific connection to Aeneas.

So why this discrepancy? Why does Servius excise all of Auctus' statements about the *flamen*-Aeneas theory from his commentary? Jones offers three potential explanations: 1) that Servius was more concerned than the Auctus commentator (perhaps Donatus) with philosophical concerns over religious ones; 2) there was less interest by Servius' time in matters of old Roman ritual; or 3) Servius' statement that Vergil took his entire (*totus*) inspiration from Apollonius' *Argonautica* precludes an identification of Dido as *flaminica*, for she is already Medea.⁷³ The first two theories may have some relevance. In the case of Hyginus, the focus of his commentary reflected his expertise; the focus of other commentators on similar matters perhaps reflects their desire to show Vergil sharing their interests and offered a way for them to show off their own knowledge and erudition. Servius lacking this interest would explain in part why he disregarded the more obscure religious notes. This complicated portrayal, which Auctus offers and Servius omits, may also be considered in light of their respective purposes; if Auctus is in fact Donatus, writing for other scholars, and Servius is writing to explain things to students, then perhaps this complex, problematic treatment is better left out of the latter's commentary. While both

⁷² Servius even uses the word *latenter* here, but rather to show that Vergil is in fact "secretly" touching upon historical matters (*historiam*) in talking about the flamine and Servius Tullius – he does not focus on the religious aspect.

⁷³ Jones 224; Serv. *Aen.* 4.1.

Servius and Auctus might be working to exculpate Aeneas from wrongdoing, perhaps the flaminical theory, in Servius' eyes, caused more difficulty for the interpretation of Aeneas and Dido than solved it. In Auctus, any troubling implications for the hero and the marriage are put aside or explained away in service of the theories of Aeneas as a priest and Vergil as a religious scholar. Perhaps, too, Servius is indeed less antagonistic regarding Dido, as Sharrock originally claimed, in not adding an extra layer to her *culpa*.

CONCLUSION

Commentators looking to assign arcane religious knowledge to Vergil could do little better than having him be an expert on the flamine. The position of *flamen Dialis* was suspended in 87 BC for the next 76 years; the next one was appointed only in 11 BC, by Augustus.⁷⁴ This means that there would have been no *flamen Dialis* during Vergil's entire lifetime. However, the fact that Augustus reinstated the priesthood only a few years after Vergil's death indicates that there was probably talk of re-establishing the position before the new *flamen*'s assumption of the role. Even if the theory that Vergil portrayed Aeneas as a *flamen* seems somewhat absurd today, it is at least understandable that ancient scholars might not have thought it as ridiculous as modern scholars tend to do. Earlier I discussed similarities between Aeneas' portrayal in Auctus as every type of leader (military, political, religious), and Augustus' own position; Augustus takes on a similar tri-partite role as leader of the Roman state. At the time of the *Aeneid*'s composition, the heroic leader in reality was Augustus. Augustus had defeated Marc Antony in battle and was the political leader of the Roman state. He became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BC, in which role he could then appoint a new *flamen Dialis* (and he did so the very next year).⁷⁵ Beard, North, and Price speculate that Augustus "very likely did vaunt his re-appointment of a *flamen Dialis*, as a sign of a new religious deal after decades of neglect, and so it might well have appeared to

⁷⁴ Szemler 171; Suetonius *Aug.* 31. There is some discrepancy as to the exact year; the Medicean text of Tacitus indicates that only 72 years passed, but this is usually corrected to match Cassius Dio (*Ann.* 3.58, Furneaux *ad loc.*; Dio 54.36). Panoussi writes that it was Augustus himself who became *flamen*, but this seems to be a misunderstanding (53). Servius Maluginensis is sometimes cited as the *flamen* appointed by Augustus, but it is unclear in the ancient sources whether this is the case. Maluginensis appears in Tacitus as the *flamen Dialis* under Tiberius, and he alludes to the re-establishing of the position; however, he does not indicate that he was the one then appointed (*Ann.* 3.58).

⁷⁵ Panoussi 53.

many observers at the time” (and to later commentators on Vergil, perhaps).⁷⁶ Moreover, in the *Res Gestae*, “Augustus claims that he was a member of all sodalities and priesthoods,” echoing the general claims in the Servius Auctus commentary that Aeneas was every kind of priest.⁷⁷ Though he was never *flamen* himself, Augustus’ adoptive father Julius Caesar had been next in line in 87 BC for the position, but was never inaugurated⁷⁸. Even if they did not share the exact same priesthood, both Augustus and Aeneas (according to the theory in Auctus) took on important religious positions in addition to their political and military ones, and Augustus put forth ideas of religious revival at Rome. These positions can be seen as roughly equivalent – both are ancient and traditionally important.⁷⁹ The idea that Aeneas is a proto-Augustus, or a sort of allegorical representation of the Roman *princeps* is not so far-fetched as the theory that Aeneas was a *flamen Dialis*, but for the ancient writer of the Auctus commentary, the two may have been linked. Thomas traces the argument that even in antiquity one can find evidence of controversy over whether the *Aeneid* was a pro-Augustan poem, or to what extent it was. The theory that Aeneas was a *flamen Dialis* finds its place in this pro-Augustan tradition as well.

There are two possibilities for how this *flamen* theory originally developed. It could have developed naturally as an extension of the idea that Vergil alluded to obscure

⁷⁶ Beard, North, and Price 130-1.

⁷⁷ Panoussi 53. The list runs thus: *Pontifex maximus, augur, XV virum sacris faciundis, VII virum epulorum, frater arvalis, sodalis Titius, fetialis fui* (7.2-3).

⁷⁸ Szemler 171. Julius Caesar and deified emperors also received *flamines* (Cic. *Phil.* 2.110; Prescendi 450).

⁷⁹ Aeneas is likely emphasized as a *flamen* and not a *pontifex* for several reasons. It helps in book 4 by giving his relationship with Dido a more or less positive interpretation (they are a proper married couple). A focus on the flamine allows the commentator to show off his own, Vergil’s, and Aeneas’ arcane religious knowledge better, by providing so many restrictions and attributes with which to work. See also the end of Chapter 2, section 1.

religious matters, or more purposefully out of a desire to defend Aeneas from the charges of misbehavior in taking up with Dido in Carthage – or more likely, some combination of both. By the time Auctus was writing, the theory certainly seems to encompass both reasons. It seems that stemming from an antiquarian interest in showing Vergil's and the scholar's own knowledge, and from a desire to show Aeneas as every kind of leader, including a religious one to match with the image of Augustus that arose soon after Vergil's death, a theory of Aeneas-as-*flamen* arose, which is advanced in a number of notes found in the expanded commentary of Servius. This theory occasionally produced discrepancies when Aeneas's behavior did not match that of a *flamen*, and these occasions had to be defended by a proponent of this theory. For book 4, this defense meant making Dido a *flaminica*, which gave Aeneas a proper Roman religious marriage. This legitimate union (granted him by the flaminical theory) helped exculpate Aeneas from wrongdoing in his union with Dido. Though Dido, then, is also afforded such a marriage and high status, the commentator eventually has her fail in her religious and Roman duties according to this particular interpretation, while Aeneas is absolved of every seeming error. Servius, though also generally interested in defending Aeneas, avoids this specific theory, for reasons perhaps pertaining to his differing interests, or an unwillingness to engage in such a problematic interpretation, or out of a desire to not add to Dido's *culpa* further religious *piacula*.

As for how modern readers are to view this theory, and this flaminical strain in the Servian commentary, such a view can give us insight into the thoughts of ancient scholars, and cause us to re-examine what was important to these scholars and their audiences about

Aeneas and Dido in those early days. While modern scholars reject the validity of *flamen* theory for Vergil's *Aeneid*, it might yet be important, insofar as it shows the lengths to which men like the Auctus commentator were willing to go to prove Aeneas' blamelessness and good Roman leadership, and how historical, literary, and religious aspects all contribute to this idea, not *just* a personal interest in obscure ritual. Even out of the diverse Servian commentary, a clear viewpoint can occasionally emerge, as that of the *flamen* Aeneas does from Auctus, offering a glimpse into the minds of some of the earliest scholars on Vergil.

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